BACC Arts Network

**Encounter with Strangers: An Exhibition of Quebec Artists in Residence at BACC**26 September - 25 October 2015 at 10.00 – 20.30 hrs.  
Studio, 4th Floor, Bangkok Art and Culture CentreOpening Reception: 25 September 2015 at 18.00 hrs.Organised by BACC Arts Network Department

BACC Arts Network Department, in collaboration with the Quebec Artists Network, has initiated an artist exchange project between Bangkok, Thailand and Quebec, Canada in order to foster a closer relationship between the two cities in terms of art and culture. The project will begin in 2015 and conclude in 2016.

**“Encounter with Strangers"**, an exhibition of Quebec Artists in Residence at BACC presents works by a group of selected Quebec artists from different disciplines and backgrounds. These artists travelled to Bangkok to participate in the two week Artist-in-residence program in September 2015. During their residency in Bangkok, they got to “encounter” strange conditions in an Asian metropolitan. Their experiences with these situations are displayed and re-imagined through their works which form this exhibition.

**Background of the exhibition**

The artist exchange project between Thailand and Quebec, Canada organised by Le Lieu Art Centre in Quebec City and Concrete House Bangkok–Nontaburi began in 1997 when Le Lieu Art Centre invited a Thai artist, Chumphol Apisuk and four others from Asia to perform in the International Live Performance Art Festival. Since then, many Thai artists such as Wasan Sitthikhet, Paisarn Plianbangchang and Jittima Pholsawek have been invited to show their works by Le Lieu Art Centre in Quebec. In the case of  
Chumphol Apisuk, he later became one of the international editors of INTER magazine, an international live performance magazine. This allows articles about live performances in South East Asia, including Thailand, to be published constantly.

Likewise, Baan Tuek Art Centre and Community has been holding Asiatopia International Performance Art Festival on an annual basis since 1998 and has invited artists from Quebec to perform at the event. Richard Martel, the Director of Le Lieu Art Centre and editor of INTER magazine has participated in the festival many times. He has also held live performance art workshops at Baan Tuek Centre on two occasions. In addition to Martel, various artists from Quebec were also invited to perform in Thailand.

The idea of an exchange of artists between Quebec and Bangkok has been raised before. And at one time Le Lieu Art Centre held exchanges between their artists and international artists from various countries including Brazil, Mexico and Poland. In the case of Asia, Taiwanese artists were exchanged continuously so they could soon see the possibilities of doing the same with Bangkok.

Quebec City was the first place in North America where Europeans came and settled in the early 17th century. Calling the city Quebec after the locals showed the harmonious relationship with the local tribes in the new land of the white settlers. Bangkok, situated at an estuary of the Chao Phraya River, was the first settlement of Chinese, Lao and Mon immigrants. For 400 years, Bangkok or Bangkok Metropolis was constructed and developed by these immigrant cultures.

These two cities on opposite sides of the world grew in a similar manner. We can see this from the development of dialects. Bangkokians have developed their own accent which is markedly different from the old Thai dialect which was used around the neighboring areas of Bangkok. It is similar to when the old French first moved to Quebec, they still used the French language called Quebeca. It is the only land in North America where people still use their unique strain of French while being surrounding by English-speaking countries. The nature of urban culture creates alienation. One way is temporary residence for most immigrants. Another is settlement for stability and a fusion that creates uniqueness and gradually transforms alienation into identity. It’s the feeling when you see a stranger every time you look at yourself in the mirror.

The artists exchange project between Bangkok and Quebec is a two-way exchange. In 2015, artists from Quebec come to stay and create their work in Bangkok for two weeks and in 2016 Thai artists will do the same in Quebec. It is a good opportunity for Thai artists to create new works in a new space where the ways of life, weather and culture are a refreshing mixture of North American and European influences. The same goes for Quebec artists, though they have studied how Bangkok lives, it will be different when they are here. It is the encounters between strangers and one of Asia’s metropolises where confusion, chaos, humidity, noisiness of people and vehicles fills the city streets. Yet under this tumult lies the silence which many communities in Bangkok have been looking for and hoping to see.

To reflect the work of artists from one city in the new circumstances of another city can be called ‘Encounter Circumstance’. The challenge is that artists have to prepare the senses under their skins for their encounter with new and unfamiliar circumstances. That is how ‘Encounter Circumstance’ is best explained. Audiences will see images of Bangkok through the eyes of strangers who reflect different visions and ideas. It also provokes Bangkokians to think about their city, its well-being and their identity as residents.

Encounter with Strangers Exhibition will be held from 26 September – 25 October 2015 at the Studio, 4th floor, Bangkok Art and Culture Centre.

Free admission

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Organised by BACC Arts Network Dept. Bangkok Art and Culture Centre

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